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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/BSC

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SUBJECT: MINAS GERAIS: GOVERNOR WANTS DEPORTEES
SENT TO OTHER STATES AS WELL

1. (SBU) In late September, 2004, Minas Gerais Governor Aécio Neves mentioned to the Consul General that he objected to the flights returning illegal Brazilian emigrants from the United States arriving only in Belo Horizonte. The Governor said that returning all deportees to Minas Gerais state, when many were from other states, made it appear that "exporting illegals" was a trademark activity of the state.

2. (U) The disagreement about where to send deported Brazilians has again heated up. A flight of 169 Brazilians scheduled to be returned to Brazil via the Confins Airport in Belo Horizonte on October 27 was cancelled at the last minute at the Governor's request. The Governor emphasized that he is not prohibiting landings such as this, simply that he requests that other states and the federal government participate in the economic and political costs of such flights.

3. (U) Neves is quoted in the daily Estado de Minas on October 28 saying "Minas Gerais is the only state that has received deportees. We have received three flights of illegal emigrants (766 repatriates) and have sent them to their home cities. . . Itamaraty (the federal government) was supposed to be a partner with the state government, especially for those people not originating from Minas Gerais, but until now it hasn't participated in the effort."

4. (U) Neves' proposal to the federal government is that planes of deportees land in a different state each time, and that individual states take responsibility for the transportation of their citizens home. The Ministry of Foreign Relations reports that at least 50 percent of the deportees are from Minas Gerais. In total, there are reportedly close 27,000 Brazilians detained in Texas for attempting to enter the U.S. illegally.

5. (SBU) COMMENT: Neves is aggressively and successfully pursuing foreign investment in his state. Information that large numbers of "mineiros" are seeking economic opportunities in the United States may not promise a healthy work climate in the minds of foreign investors. One of the reasons given for why more emigrants to the U.S. come from Minas Gerais state than any other state - that many Americans came to Minas after World War II to participate in the development of the mining and steel industries and influenced the mineiros and even supported them in getting to the United States - does not assuage the nervousness of investors today about how solid the state is economically. Neves has turned his state around in a short two-and-a-half years - from deep in the red to a respectable black. He is probably correct in seeing the repatriation flights as drawing attention to employment instability, but, rightly that it is a problem in the country as a whole, not just in the state of Minas Gerais.

ATKINS